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WORK PLAN FOR PERU AND BOLIVIA

Comments on Research Opportunities

by Richard W. Patch

Circulation of a Field Staff Associate's work plan usually is limited to the faculties of the corporate members of the AUFS. However, in discussing his approach to the study of Peru and Bolivia, Richard W. Patch touched on aspects of Latin American affairs that will interest all readers of AUFS Reports.

La Paz
January 3, 1961

The following pages contain a statement of the work I expect to embark on if not accomplish in the next 18 months but the statement is imbedded in and overlaid with reasons for undertaking the work, convictions about the importance of Latin America to the United States, and the why--in the wide world--fully occupied persons in the United States, with assignments to complete, with courses to teach, and with trains to catch, should also bother their heads about two Andean countries, one--Peru --with a population equal to the city of Tokyo, the other--Bolivia--with three-fifths of its territory virtually uninhabited.

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In the years I have spent in the Andes, as often as not isolated in a mountain community or stalking opinion on the coastal desert, I have not forgotten there are other areas of the world competing if not clamoring for attention. In this world, attention is drawn by the dramatic event and the immediacy of interest. I have no illusions that Peru and Bolivia will become a major preoccupation of the fourth estate. But that is not my concern.

My concern is not the newsworthiness of the countries, but the analysis of their problems for the insights they give into the structure and dynamics of all the Latin republics of the hemisphere. This may be high or low level study according to your viewpoint, but it is the kind of basic, continuous, research and reporting which can make the rise of a powerful demagogue less amazing, the spread of nationalism less perplexing.

Under present conditions we cannot remain indifferent to the fate of any of the world's nations. But our interest in Peru and Bolivia is more than the general concern we feel for all nations which are struggling between democratic institutions and the apparent advantages of totalitarianism. First, they are members of a special community of nations to the south of the United States, whose good will their northern neighbor has taken for granted. And if there is serious trouble in the more developed Latin countries, with at least the beginnings of a middle class having some property and prerogatives to protect, how much greater is the potential for chaotic change in these two countries. Both have a huge majority with nothing but their ponchos and mud huts to lose. They are beginning to think they may gain a gilded utopia by the expedient of destroying their governments and the institutions which support them. (This must be qualified for Bolivia which has already suffered the first great shock of its own revolution.) But even if we refuse to allow our attention to be drawn to future threats when there are plenty of present debacles to absorb our energies, we must at the last admit an intellectual interest in two republics which, despite their similar population, geography, and history, are waging valiant battles toward opposite goals: the one to maintain its conservative tradition, protect the value of its currency, and continue the power of the wealthy few over a mass of peons; the other to prevent a genuine revolution from leaping out of control in inflation, inefficiency, and factionalism. For the casual student no less than the dedicated sociologist insisting on controlled experiments, here is a laboratory of social change and power play, mundane maneuver and soaring idealized systems, to furnish material for the understanding of many countries whose problems are not so acute, whose dilemma is less clear, whose distance from the brink still allows compromise, mixed solutions, and periods of inaction. The absence of such factors makes the picture strikingly clear in Peru and Bolivia. (The problems are clear, the remedies are not.)

Here, then, is an opportunity to devote our attention periodically and briefly to a continuing situation--one which is building to a crisis in the future, but in the meantime is uncomplicated by the drama of climax, the confusion of

many forces filling the void of collapsed institutions and organizations. From these cases we may gain understanding of how such crises develop and spread, a concept of the mechanics and stages of revolution in underdeveloped countries (which lack Professor Brinton's middle class and Thermidor), a broader morphology of nationalism and, perhaps above all, an appreciation of the forces behind the personalities--the forces that pressure particular personalities to the top at particular times.

Opportunities

Peru and Bolivia offer remarkable opportunities for basic studies for several reasons. Among them is the directness of relationship between social stratification, political power, and economic conditions. In more sophisticated nations there is a real breakdown of class lines as class criteria which can be achieved (education, money) compete with class criteria which are present only from birth (family, name). The real, but partial, blurring of lines is further obscured by a popular belief that class is entirely a matter of achieved status. In the traditional Peruvian and Bolivian societies there is (in the case of Bolivia was) no such popular belief. In Peru political and economic power are in the hands of a self-conscious and until recently self-confident upper class firmly supported by a strong army. The lines are sharply drawn. Both Peru and Bolivia have as large segments of their populations people who speak indigenous languages and whose labor formed the basis for colonial agricultural economies. As the wealth, population, and industry of Peru have become more concentrated in Lima, the problem becomes ever more pressing of what is to become of the landless Indians in the antiquated agricultural system of the sierra. More serious, what would become of Peru if this nearly half of the population took the matter into their own hands as happened in Bolivia. Bolivia has passed what may be the most destructive phases of its revolution, but must find the answer for integrating Quechua- and Aymará-speaking persons into the national way of life without entirely destroying that way of life.

A second reason for turning to the two countries for basic study is the reality of their underdeveloped state. "Underdeveloped" is often used loosely as a euphemism for any nation which is not developed, regardless of its prospects for development. Both Peru and Bolivia are fortunate among their neighbors in having a wealth and diversity of resources from coal and oil to copper and gold. And perhaps even more important in a continent and world of rapidly expanding population, both countries (in spite of population mal-distribution) enjoy a surplus of cultivable land beyond the dreams of most nations. Quite obviously the problem is not lack of resources, but finding an organizational solution for their exploitation.

The precarious balance by which Peru maintains its conservatism and by which Bolivia prevents its revolution from escaping all bounds, makes both countries susceptible to influences from beyond their borders. The study of

these influences and how they are accepted or resisted is a work of importance in itself.

Project

In general terms my occupation for the next year and a half will be to undertake another stage of my ten-year project for understanding Peru and Bolivia by moving from smaller to larger social and political units. The first stage in 1951-52 and a part of 1953 consisted in living and doing research in a part of Peru dominated by indigenous communities. I conducted interviews with Quechua speakers in their own remote settlements and in the coastal haciendas where many emigrated in search of work. I also observed and participated in the life of the small Spanish-speaking mountain towns and watched their relationships with the Indian communities. In 1954-55 I did much the same in Bolivia, dividing my time between Quechua-speaking villages and small Spanish towns, but paying special heed to the social problems of the agrarian reform which had its birth and most vigorous growth in the area I was studying. The following year I spent three months doing research and reporting on a national level, centering around the presidential and legislative elections which occurred in both countries that year. The years 1957-59 were spent mainly in Peru, in the capital, with periodic trips to areas where local affairs assumed national significance. Affairs in Bolivia were reported during relatively brief visits, drawing extensively on the previous crucial years spent there. The period of 1960-62 will be spent principally in Bolivia, in La Paz, translating currents of local affairs into a national context, and observing the effect of decisions in the capital on the rest of the country. Peru will be visited frequently and will also be the subject of reports.

The purpose of this long approach to national reporting is to escape the common identification of the nation with the capital, and the confusion of legislative action with the living reality in countries which are not as centralized as they appear on organization charts.

It requires work on many levels. The statements of ministers and party leaders must be compared with the activities and attitudes of ministerial officials and party workers. A Supreme Decree which makes subsidies illegal in the mining commissaries must be compared with the actual practices of mine supervisors. United Nations officials in La Paz freely describe their colonization project in Santa Cruz, but the description may be at variance with conditions and opinions in the actual project. Above all, it is easy to absorb the La Paz images of such important national endeavors as the agrarian reform (the Government speaks of the number of titles distributed, the opposition Falange considers it an economic disaster), but the images prove superficial after a period of association with the reform as it is administered in the countryside. A talk with Víctor Raúl Haya de la Torre gives one impression of the Peruvian Apra Party, talks with Apra students in the

University of San Marcos give a quite different impression. Thus I consider my work to lie with students and ministers, Indians and the "professional-middle" class, oil executives and union leaders, schoolteachers and tin miners. This cannot be done by interviews alone, but requires active participation in societies and organizations outside La Paz and Lima.

Problems for Research

The most important single problem for research in the two countries is the progress of the integration of the indigenous population into the Spanish-speaking, Western-oriented culture of the cities and towns. The speakers of Indian languages in Peru comprise nearly half the total population but live apart from those persons who wear shoes instead of sandals, smoke tobacco instead of chewing coca, and who recognize a nation instead of a social horizon bounded by the confines of a nearly self-sufficient community. In Peru the vital problem is whether the Indians will accept Western ways within their communities, which they have been very reluctant to do; or move out of the communities in large enough numbers to compensate at least for the rapidly increasing population growth, which seems dubious in the face of present unemployment in the cities; or remain a dormant force offering all-too-attractive possibilities for organization and manipulation.

In Bolivia the main crisis of integration appears past. Whatever the intent of the originators of the revolution of 1952 the Indians took advantage of the disturbed conditions to demand and get land redistribution, voting rights, and educational facilities. In fact as well as in name they have ceased to be "Indians" and have become "rural folk" (campesinos). Here the main item of interest is the new culture which is evolving among these people, an amalgam of Indian and mestizo, where rites to the Pachamama exist beside devotions to the Virgin, where spell casters ward off the evil eye and native curers advise penicillin to combat distress caused by too much maize beer. The new culture promises to be like none other in Latin America, and its evolution is a fascinating process.

As a result of the movement of Indians into the national society, and of the stresses inevitably accompanying industrialization and mass communication, the traditional class structure is changing. In Peru it is still possible for a multimillionaire candy manufacturer with half a dozen town and country houses to be considered huachafo (a uniquely Limeño word which means vulgar, lacking in taste, a person who owns multicolored automobiles) but his sons and daughters are accepted as gente decente (upper class). The days of Lima's upper class, which educates its sons in France and the United States, which builds beach resorts where $250,000 vacation houses are sold only to families which meet the test (most are still vacant), and which entertains itself in an endless round of teas, dinners (beginning at ten, moving to the Grill Bolívar at one, disbanding at dawn), and week-end fiestas costing the host the equiva-

lent of the life earnings of several of his employees, are numbered. As more people have such bright ideas as manufacturing foam rubber by mixing the latex and ammonia in a milk can, whipping the result in a baker's mixer, and finishing the layers in a homemade oven, the "professional-middle" class is bound to be joined by nonprofessionals to constitute a middle class as it is understood in the United States and Europe. At present it is composed mainly of teachers, professors, lawyers, and doctors. Most earn so little that, without property or prospects, they tend to be more revolutionary than the worker thinking of five mouths to feed.

In Bolivia the class structure is already changing so rapidly that one is in doubt whether to address the Vice President as "Your Excellency," "Sir," or "Comrade." The upper class which once drove Simon Patiño, who had one of the greatest fortunes of the world, out of Bolivia because he was a cholo (of Indian ancestry) has itself fallen on evil days. It has been divested of its land and privilege, and most of its members have found it prudent to move to other countries. The former Indians, mere serfs until 1952, outside the social structure and barely accorded the status of human beings, have become an identifiable lower class. Their relation with the urban lower class has not crystallized. Nor has the economy recovered sufficiently from the drastic measures of the revolution to provide the wherewithal for a middle class. The result is a fluid situation in which a Quechua-speaking campesino from Ucureña may give a banquet for the Ambassador to the United States in a hotel in La Paz (serving roast pigeon and maize beer). The study of the development of rigidities in the system will be an instructive exercise.

There is another area where changes are taking place in the national consciousness. Nationhood and nationalism are not synonymous, in spite of the impression sometimes given by the new African states. In Peru and especially Bolivia the two phenomena have had quite different histories. It is instructive to separate out the sources and trace the development of the new nationalism.

Much work can be done in the political arena. One theme is the contrast between the actions of a government shoring up a system with its roots in the time of Charlemagne and which has long since passed out of existence among modern nations, and those of a government which decisively abandoned the feudalistic system eight years ago, along with the economic and social institutions which supported it, and since then has been attempting to build a new economy (with such new resources as oil, copper, and sugar) and a new mass-based political machine to give viability and meaning to the emerging social novelties.

As they struggle with these large problems on their own reduced scale the countries are more than ordinarily influenced by other countries. The United States contributes 30% of the Bolivian national budget. Its voice can be editorially condemned but hardly ignored. The Soviet Union lately made a

dramatic if not well-substantiated offer of a tin smelter to Bolivia, and to have their own smelter is to most Bolivians, regardless of its economic feasibility, an aspiration second only to their longing for a corridor to the sea. The United States with its dogged insistence on economic responsibility (sometimes in the face of political responsibility) and the USSR, with supreme indifference to economic realities when they do not coincide with political ends, leave a confused but ever-present attitude of admiration and fear in the minds of nationals. Bearded newcomers from Cuba and mysterious Chinese working through Czechoslovakian legations are also having their effect on impressionable students disappointed in Apra's "coexistence" or the MNR's footdragging.

There are the social problems of economic change. Numbers of Peruvian Indians have found entrance into the mestizo world by way of the sugar plantations of the coast. These plantations are mechanizing, as Hawaiian and other producers did years ago. This leaves the underemployed Indian population the difficult choice between remaining in their communities (where modern medicine has just begun to cut a high death rate, thus making land even more scarce in relation to population) or joining the swollen ranks of the unemployed in Lima, living in conditions worse than in the rural communities, waiting hopefully for a chance to learn mechanics while being given a meal a day and a pallet at night. Declining oil production in Peru and plummeting tin production in Bolivia add to unemployment, lack of risk capital slows new development needed to take up the slack.

Given the real lack of capital the dilemma facing the countries is whether to risk inflation by ambitious development projects to reduce unemployment and increase production, or to maintain foreign exchange stability at the cost of austerity and unemployment. Since 1956, when the International Monetary Fund took on its present watchdog role, rigorously laying down conditions under which such members as Peru and Bolivia are allowed lines of credit, the dilemma had been taken out of the hands of the governments. Because the United States insists on IMF approval of internal fiscal matters, the only open choice has been stabilization and austerity. But appearances are, in 1960, that stabilization without development brings too many political problems to be endured in its present form.

A happier focus of attention will be that of underlining the resources which are only beginning to be exploited: iron and copper in Peru; oil, copper, and wolfram in Bolivia. Transportation difficulties are slowly being smoothed, and there is little reason to doubt that "Worth a Peru" may once again appear in the world's vocabulary to signify inestimable wealth. Another part of the same emphasis will be impressions gathered in the less accessible regions of the Amazon regions of both countries, regions into which roads are being pushed, which soon will be crossed by jet flights, which must eventually yield to the population pressures building around them.

In Conclusion

This clearly is a range of problems to occupy a number of men for a period of years. It is not my rash intention to define them all in the next 18 months. Instead it seems reasonable to set up objectives both to guide and to explain future work. That work will be stimulated and limited by special events and circumstances. Just as Latin reporting of United States elections gives insights into attitudes toward the United States, so conflicts such as the Peruvian-Ecuadorian border dispute make it difficult or impossible to work in the area where large numbers of troops have been mobilized. Studies must often rather haphazardly take advantage of the most promising leads and avoid those where one can become impossibly bogged in nonco-operation or simple preoccupation with existence.

The result of the studies will not be a systematic series of papers treating the listed problems from social integration to economic development, but instead a number of reports which fit into the general scheme. A major purpose of the reports, and later the lectures to be given at AUFS member universities and colleges, is to make the countries appear less exotic, less apart from the world of reality. It is entirely possible I may never mention llamas or Indian women in bowler hats. If I write about native curing practices I may feel impelled to remind myself of the strange vogue of honey and vinegar in the United States. My function is not to emphasize different customs with the amazement or amusement of the travel writer, but, when differences are significant, to make them understandable in their own terms. As a frivolous example many Americans in Latin America are baffled by the unfailing regularity with which hot and cold water taps imported from the United States are reversed in their installation, so that a tap clearly marked "C" produces scalding water, while "H" gives a steady stream of cold. The answer is clear to Spanish speakers--the English initials do not correspond to the Spanish adjectives, instead the "C" appears to stand for caliente, and the meaningless "H" may do as well as the more cosmopolitan Europeans' little blue dot for frio. On a less pedestrian level there is a great need to put Latin American "revolutions" into a comprehensible context.

Taken seriously, we may be able to appreciate--in this generation--the reasonableness of the Latin American countries' ties and conflicts with the United States. Thus may the ties be strengthened and the conflicts reduced, while at the same time we may find new dimensions in our own way of life.

Richard W. Patch